

**The Crucible, Act IV**, by Arthur Miller**Literary Analysis: Theme**

The havoc that fear and suspicion can wreak if not countered by reason is the most obvious theme of *The Crucible*. A **theme** is a central idea of insight that a writer tries to convey in a literary work. Miller's depiction of paranoia in Salem and his references to America in the 1950's make clear his ideas on the topic.

A work of literature may have more than one theme. Miller carefully intertwines other topics and themes as well. The personal motivations of the characters, for example, contribute to their fates along with the religious issue of witchcraft. John withholds critical information about Abigail, for example, because of his past relationship with her. Hale's academic pride blinds him to hysteria's momentum for too long. How does Miller spin these threads into themes about people and how they behave? What themes does he express?

**DIRECTIONS:** Use the following chart to help you identify themes in *The Crucible*. In the first column are subjects or topics that Miller addresses in the play. In the second column, write a sentence that states a theme about each topic that the events in the play express. In the third column, list the events or evidence in the play that points to the theme you've identified.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Events in Play</b>
1. Guilt		
2. Revenge		
3. Pride		
4. Intolerance		
5. Authority		
6. Integrity		